

# THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## US steps up killer drone hits in Yemen and Somalia

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Washington is stepping up use of aerial attack drones targeting Islamist leaders in Somalia and Yemen and establishing four new bases for the robot assassins in the Horn of Africa. Under discussion is whether to also use drones to kill unidentified suspected Islamist combatants in the two countries, as they do in Pakistan.

A long-standing U.S. drone base in Djibouti has been used to target al-Qaeda forces in Yemen. Now the U.S. military is reopening a drone base on the island of Seychelles off the coast of East Africa. Previously, the base was used to deploy drones for surveillance purposes. But now bases there will deploy MQ-9 Reapers armed with Hellfire missiles and guided 500-pound bombs.

Seychelles is less than 900 miles from Somalia, where Washington has been going after al-Shabab, an Islamist group allied with al-Qaeda. Some 100 U.S. troops and “contractors” operate out of the base. Another is planned for Ethiopia and a fourth for an unnamed Arab country, according to the *Washington Post*.

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## Gov’t-paid journalists stoked bias in Cuban 5 trial

BY MICHEL POITRAS

There are many facets to the U.S. government’s frame-up of the Cuban Five, who are being punished for their unbroken courage and dignity as working-class fighters and the example of the revolution that produced them. One of the current fronts in their legal fight to overturn their frame-up convictions exposes the fact that some of the journalists who wrote false and inflammatory articles about the five during their trial in Miami were at the time on the U.S. government payroll.

Known as the Cuban Five, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González had been living and working in southern Florida in order to gather information on Cuban counterrevolutionary groups organizing violent and at times deadly attacks against Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the U.S. and elsewhere, with the tacit knowledge and backing of Washington.

In September 1998, the five were arrested and in June 2001 convicted of trumped-up charges including

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## Solidarity gives boost to sugar workers’ fight

1,300 fight 2-month lockout in Midwest



Militant/Frank Forrester

Members of Laborer’s Local 563 join Sept. 16 protest of workers fighting lockout by American Crystal Sugar outside office of scab recruiter Strom Engineering in Minnetonka, Minn.

BY FRANK FORRESTER

EAST GRAND FORKS, Minn., September 26—Solidarity for 1,300 sugar beet workers in the Upper Midwest continues to expand as their struggle approaches the two-month mark. The workers were locked out August 1 after they rejected American Crystal Sugar’s union-busting contract demands.

American Crystal Sugar bosses are pressing for higher health care costs and the right to contract out union jobs.

They have refused to negotiate with the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco and Grain Millers Union and have been running five factories in the Red River Valley of Minnesota and North Dakota with scab labor. The sugar giant has also locked out workers at two smaller plants in Chaska, Minn., and Mason City, Iowa.

In response, the sugar workers are reaching out for support and working people are answering with donations

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## Int’l campaign to win readers to workers’ paper is under way

BY MICHEL POITRAS

The October 1-November 20 international campaign to win 2,200 subscribers to the *Militant* is under way. Members of the international communist movement and other supporters of the paper are using the campaign

to respond to spreading resistance by working people to the unfolding social crisis of capitalist rule.

Partisans of the paper will be reaching out to working people and youth in urban and rural neighborhoods,

Continued on page 4

## Steelworkers in Pa. rally against Armstrong’s union-busting drive

BY JANET POST

LANCASTER, Pa.—“Stand Up, Fight Back!” shouted more than 150 members and supporters of United Steelworkers Local 285 at a picket line and rally here at the corporate headquarters of Armstrong World Industries September 22.

Two hundred and sixty production workers, including around 40 who are not union members, have been locked out of Armstrong’s Marietta plant since July 17 in a contract dispute over wages, health benefits, pensions, seniority and overtime. Armstrong manufactures ceilings, floors and cabinets.

Workers at the Marietta plant voted down the company’s latest offer by 85 percent September 15. It was “an even worse offer” than the first one workers rejected, said John Bevel, working president of Unit 441 of Local 285.

Contracts at Armstrong plants here and in Macon, Ga., expire October 3. Bevel told the rally that the Marietta workers “will stand behind Lancaster and Macon.” Strike authorization

votes have passed at both plants, he reported.

“We’re only fighting for what we think is a fair contract.” Carol Ortman, a locked-out machine operator, told the *Militant*. Ortman has worked at the company for 29 years, starting right out of high school, and now volunteers for the 3-7 a.m. shift of the

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Militant/Janet Post

Selling *Militant* and books on revolutionary working-class politics at Sept. 22 rally for workers locked out by Armstrong World Industries outside corporate headquarters in Lancaster, Pa.

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# Workers at Verizon pay for concessions on safety

On September 14 Verizon worker Douglas LaLima, 37, was killed on the job in the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y., while he was installing cables from a hoisted bucket that came in contact with a high-voltage electrical line. LaLima had worked for Verizon for 15 years.

Verizon spokesman John Bono-mo told the media the incident was “highly unusual.” But electrocutions of electrical and communications workers in bucket trucks are not uncommon. At least four other Verizon workers have been killed in similar incidents over the last five years in Plymouth and Sharon, Mass.; Baltimore; and Rhode Island. The letter below from Stu Singer, a meat truck driver in New York City, describes discussions with Verizon workers recently on strike about the fight for safety.

I talked with Verizon workers during the strike, and actually for many years beforehand about safety on the bucket trucks. What I’ve noticed is that there is frequently only one worker on the crew.

Every Verizon worker I ever spoke to about it was furious. It was a concession the union agreed to years ago and it is unquestionably dangerous. You must have at least a two-person crew when using a bucket truck, or even just a ladder or climbing with spikes. If the spotter goes away, makes a phone call, whatever, you come down. No spotter, no work.

When a worker goes up in a bucket,

there must be at least one spotter on the ground, following every move and especially watching for proximity to power lines. And watching for traffic and other dangers. Half the time they are working in the middle of a busy street with their work area just protected by a few traffic cones.

I worked as a lineman for a while in the 1970s before I got hired at an iron ore mine in Minnesota. We were hanging the first cable TV system and used bucket trucks where there were paved roads and used spikes strapped to our legs to climb telephone poles out in the country. We would try to spot for each other when using the trucks. But there was no union.

The picture at the right is of one of the Verizon strikers’ roving picket squads during their strike. The guy climbing down from the pole is a manager scab. The strikers used their own cars and followed the Verizon



Militant/Stu Singer

Verizon strikers picket in August in Queens, N.Y., as boss on pole performs struck work.

trucks that were working during the strike. They would surround the work area yelling and chanting and making it difficult for the scabs. These are the little actions I saw all over Brooklyn and Queens.

Stu Singer  
New York, N.Y.

## US gov’t prepares long-term Iraq presence

BY SETH GALINSKY

Washington is impatiently awaiting a formal request from the Iraqi government to maintain thousands of U.S. troops in the country beyond the so-called withdrawal deadline of December 31.

According to the U.S. Army press office, as of September 13 there were 85,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and Kuwait. The office did not provide a clear breakdown between the two. The Associated Press cites 46,000 U.S. troops in Iraq.

In August, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told *Stars and Stripes* that the Iraqi government had said it wanted to negotiate a new troop forces agreement. But with just a few months to go before the current agreement between the two governments expires, no deal has been reached.

Meanwhile, Washington’s embassy in Baghdad is the world’s largest. With 619 apartments, restaurants, indoor and outdoor basketball courts, and an indoor Olympic-size swimming pool, the 21-building complex is similar in size to Vatican City.

Washington plans to have some 20,000 personnel at the two embassy branches, two consulates, and three police training centers, as well as 5,500 private security officers.

The White House had proposed keeping as many as 10,000 troops in Iraq, below the 14,000 to 18,000 recommended by Gen. Lloyd Austin, commander of U.S. forces there. Fox

News and the *New York Times* reported September 6 that Panetta is now recommending just 3,000 to 4,000 U.S. troops remain. The *Times* said the reduction underscores “the delicacy of the question at home and in Iraq.”

The Obama administration is looking at basing troops in neighboring Kuwait that would rotate in and out of Iraq, skirting any troop limit negotiated with Baghdad.

The U.S. military also has many other forces in the region, including 30,000 Navy troops and 30 warships in its Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain.



U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Joseph M. Buliavac  
U.S. marine trains Kuwaiti soldier at Kuwait naval base in July. Washington may use bases in Kuwait to skirt troop limits in Iraq.

# THE MILITANT

**“The ‘Militant’ is a good newspaper.”**

**“The ‘Militant’ is a good newspaper, with lots of information. I am especially interested in what is happening to the unions and news about the world.”**

—Manuel Ramon,  
locked-out sugar worker,  
East Grand Forks, Minn.



Militant/Frank Forrestal

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# UK agency workers strike banana plant, win support

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN  
AND ROSE KNIGHT

LUTON, England—Agency (temporary) workers at Pratt's Bananas here walked out and set up a picket line September 1, forcing the company to retreat from its plans to downgrade their wages and working conditions.

"The strike was not planned at all," Katarzyna Zurowska, one of the workers, told the *Militant*. "When we turned up to work and read the company notice announcing new conditions—effectively threatening us with the sack [firing] if we didn't accept them—we said 'enough is enough.'"

Conditions at Pratt's, which supplies bananas to supermarket chains including Tesco, won notoriety in 2007 when a BBC radio program drew attention to the grueling schedule and mistreatment of workers. The workers won union recognition in 2008 after a successful union-organizing drive by the GMB.

But today the bulk of Pratt's 500 workers are considered to be employed by a separate agency, and as such are not represented by the union. The company has targeted these workers to boost its profits.

Agency workers arriving for the afternoon shift joined the strike and picket. "There were over 200 of us altogether," Zurowska said, showing us a list of the names and addresses of all the strikers. "Truck drivers refused to do deliveries until 3:00 p.m. The next day we put up a picket at 6:00 a.m., faced by a lot of police with dogs. But our solidarity forced the company to back down. They're now delaying the new conditions until December."

Zurowska came to the U.K. in 2006 from Kraków, Poland, where she had a small retail shop. She has not been involved in anything like this before.

"I started working at Pratt's as a packer over two years ago," she said.

"Then we were packing nine boxes of loose bananas per hour. They then increased it to 12 boxes and now it's 14 boxes per hour.

"The work is very physical. All the workers are poorly paid, but the agency workers are on less, minimum wage."

Most of the workers are immigrants from Poland and Lithuania, as well as from Albania and the Indian subcontinent.

According to workers, the company wants to change the pay guidelines and schedules to eliminate overtime pay and double-time pay for weekend work.

Pratt's is also pressing to put agency workers on "zero hour" contracts. Instead of set weekly schedules, agency workers would be called to work whenever and for however many hours the company decides.

"Some of us have worked here for five years but still the agency doesn't give us a permanent contract, they just give temporary ones, and now with zero hours contracts we have no stability at all," Kristina Bulkyte told *Luton News*.

"The company says they need the changes because of the high interest payments on their loans. But we don't see why the workers—agency or permanent—should pay for the credit crunch," Zurowska said.

## Inmates' appeals spotlight torture by Chicago cops

BY JOHN HAWKINS

SPRINGFIELD, Ill.—Legal proceedings brought by prisoners who say their "confessions" were forced under torture at the hands of Chicago cops are shining a spotlight on the police methods of brutality and frame-up used against working people. The case of Stanley Wrice is among them.

The Illinois Supreme Court heard

arguments September 15 for and against upholding a 2010 state appeals court decision that would clear the way for giving Wrice a new hearing.

Wrice, convicted in 1983 for rape, was sentenced to 100 years in prison. In 1991 he appealed his conviction on the grounds that Sgt. John Byrne and Detective Peter Dignan tortured statements out of him. The Cook County Circuit Court dismissed the appeal and the appellate court upheld the dismissal. Wrice appealed again in 2000 with similar results.

In 2006, a Report of the Special State's Attorney detailed a nearly four-year investigation into abuse by Chicago police based on 148 complaints. The report concluded that there was sufficient evidence to prosecute several cops, but that the statute of limitations precluded doing so.

Among the officers cited, the report documented the actions of Chicago Police Lt. Jon Burge and implicated both Byrne and Dignan.

A year later Wrice filed his third appeal. While the circuit court rejected his petition again, this time the appeals court granted Wrice a new evidentiary hearing.

Myles O'Rourke, arguing on behalf of Cook County, urged the court to overturn the appellate court's decision. He didn't challenge the coerced nature of the confession, but said it was a "harmless error" because, he conjectured, the jury would have convicted Wrice without the confession.

"The law in Illinois is the use of a physically tortured confession is never harmless error and this court has not wavered from that finding," responded Heidi Linn Lambros, Wrice's attorney.

"The last thing the jury heard . . . was the state flippantly and mockingly saying, 'You must disbelieve Mr. Wrice when he says that Byrne and Dignan beat him in the basement of Area 2 police station.'"

More than 60 prominent attorneys led by former Illinois Gov. Jim Thompson filed a brief demanding new hearings for 15 prisoners who were convicted on the basis of confessions under threats and torture.

"I think the Supreme Court is going to uphold the appellate court decision and grant Mr. Wrice a new hearing," Lambros told the *Militant*.

In a related development, attorneys for former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley petitioned a U.S. district judge to reconsider a decision that Daley be a defendant in the cop torture suit brought by Michael Tillman against Burge, other cops, and local government officials

### New York: 'Cops left him to die alone'



Militant/Dan Fein

NEW YORK—Some 250 family members and neighbors of John Collado marched to the 34th police precinct here September 17 from the apartment complex where he was killed by a plainclothes cop.

Collado was shot September 6 in the Inwood neighborhood of Manhattan after he attempted to intervene in what witnesses say appeared to be an assault on his neighbor. He died at Harlem Hospital the next day.

"My father was a good man who had great respect for the law," 21-year-old John Collado Jr. told the *Militant*. "I know that if the officer identified himself my father would not have intervened. I want the cop to get justice, get arrested and get 25 years to life like anyone else who commits murder."

Collado's wife, Amarilis Collado, told *El Diario* that family members were prevented from accompanying him in the ambulance or seeing him during his last moments at Harlem Hospital. "They left him to die alone."

Banayz Tavares, Collado's niece and a nurse in training, was arrested when she tried to help Collado, reported *El Diario* and the *Daily News*.

—DEBORAH LIATOS

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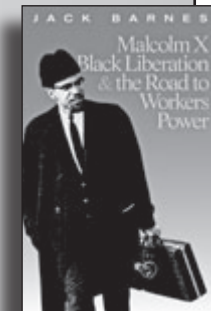
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Contact distributors on page 8—subscription rates on page 2



Pathfinder Press



# Union women’s auxiliary protests cop attack at port

BY MARY MARTIN

WEST KELSO, Wash.—Some 50 members and supporters of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Ladies’ Auxiliary held a protest rally at the courthouse here September 24 against police brutality directed at union members and supporters. Participants included several auxiliary members who were assaulted by cops three days earlier during a peaceful protest to block a train from entering the EGT Grain Terminal at the Port of Longview.

ILWU Local 21 is engaged in a fight against union busting by EGT Development. EGT has refused to hire ILWU workers in violation of an agreement between the union and the Port of Longview. The company has instead hired members of Operating Engineers Local 701 through a subcontractor.

During the September 21 protest, private cops from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad attacked demonstrators without warning. Karin Hogg, vice president of the Ladies’ Auxiliary, told rally participants. They targeted several of the women who were sitting on the railroad tracks. They kneed the women in their backs, yanked their arms behind them, handcuffed them and turned them over to Longview police and Cowlitz County sheriff’s department deputies who stood by.

During the arrests, cops shoved Jennifer Wood face down into the gravel and Kahne Witham was dragged handcuffed across the tracks, the two protesters told the *Militant*. Phoebe Wiest told the *Daily News* that she suffered a torn rotator cuff after the railroad cops wrenched her arm behind her.

Two ILWU Local 21 members, Byron Jacobs and Kelly Muller, rushed to Wiest’s aid as she shouted in pain, Wood and Witham explained. Cops wrestled them to the ground, handcuffed and then pepper sprayed them. The two unionists were later charged with assaulting the cops. Local 21 President Dan Coffman was also arrested during the protest.

“My grandfather was an ILWU member and he would be proud to see us protesting here today,” said Wood. “We are teaching our kids a life lesson. No one has the right to do what cops did to us—men or women.” An ILWU community support rally has been called for September 29.

The ILWU had filed a lawsuit against Longview Police Chief Jim Duscha and Cowlitz County Sheriff Mark Nelson and their agencies for police brutality and harassment.

A federal judge in Tacoma ruled September 15 that the ILWU is in contempt of court for having violated a September 1 restraining order prohibiting the union from any acts that impede EGT business, including protests to try to block grain trains.

Judge Ronald Leighton also said he would fine the union based on the EGT company’s estimate of damages for al-



Members and supporters of ILWU Local 21 march by Cowlitz County courthouse in Kelso, Wash., September 16 to back longshore workers fighting union busting at Port of Longview.

leged vandalism of company property by unionists at a September 8 protest.

Meanwhile, the Maritime Union of Australia offered support to the Longview ILWU local. A solidarity

protest of Australian dockworkers took place September 21 at the Townsville Port where a ship owned by EGT’s parent company, STX Pan Ocean, was docked.

## International subscription drive is under way

**Continued from front page**  
in coalfields and oil fields, on picket lines and at other actions where workers are standing up.

“Workers locked out by Armstrong World Industries, members of United Steelworkers Local 285/441 in Lancaster, Pa., have welcomed coverage of their fight by the *Militant*,” wrote Janet Post from Philadelphia. Since their fight began July 17, nine workers have subscribed and three have bought copies of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs, one of the five books on sale during the drive. (See ad on page 3.)

“The Steelworkers have copied *Militant* articles on their struggle and made them available to workers in the picket line tent outside the Armstrong factory in Marietta and in the union hall,” adds Post. “Many are interested in learning about the fight by American Crystal Sugar workers in the Upper Midwest, and have expressed solidarity.” (See front page article.)

Some 100 workers in battle against American Crystal Sugar have subscribed to the paper since they were locked out August 1.

Members of the Socialist Workers Party from Seattle joined a protest in West Kelso, Wash., September 24, of about 50 members and supporters of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Ladies Auxiliary who had been assaulted by cops. The longshore

workers were trying to stop a railroad car from entering EGT Development terminal at the Port of Longview in response to EGT’s disregard for the port’s employment agreement with the union.

“More than one woman nodded when we showed them the article on Troy Davis, commenting that now they know the cops do lie,” wrote Mary Martin. Five bought copies of the paper. Davis was framed up for the killing of a police officer in 1989 and executed September 21 by the state of Georgia.

Knocking on doors in working-class neighborhoods and talking with a broad section of working people will be a key aspect of the campaign.

The *Militant* will also be getting around at protests and other events.

Joe Swanson reported that participants in a September 24 meeting in Omaha, Neb., on the ongoing fight against the frame-up of Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa bought four subscriptions to the paper and four books by Pathfinder Press, including *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and *the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes. “We talked with people there about the frame-up case of the five

Cuban revolutionaries held in U.S. jails since 1998,” Swanson said. (See articles on front page and page 7.)

Twenty-five subscriptions, 58 copies of the paper, and 33 Pathfinder books were sold at a recent book fair held in Gothenburg, Sweden. Nineteen subscriptions—a record number—along with 124 Pathfinder books were sold at the Fête de l’Humanité, a three-day street fair in Paris sponsored by *l’Humanité*, the daily newspaper of the French Communist Party.

Initial quotas adopted by distributors around the world total 2,145. Starting next week, charts on the front page will keep readers informed of the drive’s progress in each area. Send your comments, exchanges and experiences by 8:00 a.m. Tuesday, EDT. To join the campaign contact distributors listed on page 8.

Along with the subscription drive, the SWP is also organizing an eight-week Party-Building Fund to raise \$100,000. Initial quotas adopted by branches total \$100,900. Starting next week, the *Militant* will run regular articles on the effort.

## Two workers die in North Dakota oil fields amid bosses’ profit drive

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

An oil boom in western North Dakota, attracting thousands of workers, has been a profit bonanza for the oil barons. For workers, pressed to maximize “productivity,” it has brought jobs along with death and injury.

An oil well explosion September 14 near Williston, N.D., left two workers dead from burn injuries—Brendan Wegner, 21, of Montello, Wisc., and Ray Hardy of Mohall, N.D. Two others—Doug Hysjulien and Michael Twinn—remain hospitalized in critical condition in St. Paul, Minn.

The well, owned by Oasis Petroleum of Texas, is one of 100 the company operates in North Dakota, reported the *Bismarck Tribune*. Production began there about a month ago. In July a Cyclone Drilling rig exploded near Beach, N.D., critically burning two workers.

Oil rig fatalities in North Dakota for

2011 are now five, up from three last year. The number of injuries so far this year is nearly 1,900, more than a 150 percent increase over all of 2010, Bryan Klipfel, director of North Dakota Workforce Safety & Insurance, told the media.

The state is experiencing “what many are calling the largest oil boom in recent North American history,” noted the Associated Press. Some oil companies project increasing the number of wells there from 5,000 to 48,000 over the next 20 years, reported the *New York Times*.

“There’s oil companies coming from all over the country now,” Williston Mayor Ward Koeser told National Public Radio. Unemployment there is less than 2 percent and the town has grown from 12,000 to 20,000 in the last four years. There’s “probably between 2,000 and 3,000 job openings in Williston right now,” he said.

<i>Militant</i> ’ Subscription Drive	
October 1 to November 20	
Country	Quota
UNITED STATES	
Atlanta	165
Boston	55
Chicago	160
Des Moines	150
Houston	80
Lincoln, Neb.	20
Los Angeles	150
Miami	90
New York	250
Philadelphia	90
San Francisco	165
Seattle	170
Twin Cities	140
Washington, D.C.	60
Total U.S.	1,745
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UNITED KINGDOM	
London	120
Manchester	60
Total UK	180
New Zealand	80
Australia	65
Total	2,145

\$100,000	
Party Building Fund	
	Quota
Atlanta	8,000
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Des Moines	3,000
Houston	4,000
Lincoln, Neb.	200
Los Angeles	8,500
Miami	3,200
New York	20,000
Philadelphia	3,700
San Francisco	14,000
Seattle	9,000
Twin Cities	6,000
Washington	7,500
TOTAL	\$100,900



## ON THE PICKET LINE

### Queens solidarity rally backs building workers' strike

FAR ROCKAWAY, N.Y.—Some 300 striking building maintenance workers and their supporters rallied September 21 at the Dayton Beach Park Co-Op apartments here in Queens. The 27 workers, members of Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, went on strike July 7 in response to management's contract demands, which include higher health insurance, a four-year wage freeze, and layoffs.

The strikers, who maintain the giant apartment complex of 5,000 people, were joined by other Local 32BJ members from other buildings and by Dayton Beach Park residents.

"They are not treating our members fairly," said Wayne Shawlinski, a 32BJ member and building worker in Manhattan. "They just want a 45 cents per hour raise in each year of the contract. We live from paycheck to paycheck."

"Most of these guys have worked here a long time," said Brian Courtney, a 35-year Dayton Beach Park resident. "Management does not want the union."

Ray Ceballos, the strikers' union steward who has worked at the complex for 22 years, told the rally, "We are not going anywhere. New York is a union town."

—Dan Fein

### Grocery workers in California approve new three-year pact

LOS ANGELES—After seven months of negotiations, United Food and Commercial Workers locals throughout southern California voted September 22 to approve a three-year contract with Albertson's, Ralphs and Von's grocery chains. The agreement covers 62,000 baggers, checkers, meat cutters and other grocery workers.

On September 15 the union gave 72-hour notice that it would strike. The next day a tentative agreement was reached.

In August more than 90 percent of the workers rejected the bosses' concessions demands.

Ralphs supermarket had threatened to close all its stores in the event of a strike. Von's vowed to stay open with replacement workers and management.

Neither the vote results nor the contract provisions have been released to

the press. Union members received a two-page summary of the proposal.

"I voted for the contract because we held onto our health care, Tom Hancock, a checker at Von's, told the *Militant*. "The union explained that the companies agreed to contribute to the fund and that it will be solvent for the next three years."

"As a meat cutter, I'm glad we held onto our 40-hour guarantee," said Jeff Heckathorn.

—Arlene Rubinstein

### California nurses walk out in fight against takebacks

SAN FRANCISCO—Thousands of nurses and other hospital workers in California carried out a one-day strike September 22 against takeback contracts being demanded by two giant hospital chains, Sutter Health and Kaiser Permanente.

"Sutter is threatening to cut every single benefit we have," said Jan Carter, one of several hundred nurses who rallied outside the Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley. Hospital demands include cuts to paid sick leave, forcing nurses to pay more for medical care, and reductions in pay for newly hired nurses.

"It's not just about the money. We're here because Sutter is hurting patient care," said Lori Anson, referring to the hospital's demand that nurses give up the right to advocate for their pa-



Militant/Paul Mailhot

Building workers protest September 21 at Dayton Beach Park Co-op apartments in Queens, N.Y. Management demands workers pay more for health care and accept wage freeze.

tients.

Eight Sutter hospitals in northern California employ some 4,500 nurses who are members of the union, the California Nurses Association. After the nurses announced the one-day strike, Sutter retaliated by locking them out for additional days.

Some 4,000 nurses and other hospital workers at Kaiser Permanente in contract negotiations throughout California are members of the National Union of Healthcare Workers.

They are being asked to accept cuts in medical benefits and pensions. Thousands of CNA-organized Kaiser nurses walked out in solidarity with their coworkers.

A lively picket line outside the Kaiser Hospital in San Francisco included many of the hospital's CNA nurses as well as optical workers, cleaners, mental health workers, and others who are members of the NUHW. Nurses on the line emphasized that although their union recently signed a new contract with Kaiser, solidarity with the NUHW workers is necessary.

"The central issue for us is staffing," explained Julie Whitehead, one of many psychologists on the line. She said not having enough therapists meant appointments are delayed, often as much as six weeks.

In southern California, Kaiser Permanente workers struck for three days beginning September 21.

"An early morning shift of pickets was able to hold the line against five busloads of strikebreakers for over an hour," said Patricia Tamayo, an intensive care nurse, outside the Los Angeles Medical Center in Hollywood. It was only after a show of force by the police and threats of arrest, she said, that the buses went in.

—Betsey Stone, with Barbara Bowman from L.A. contributing



Militant/Betsey Stone

Nurses rally September 22 at Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley, Calif. Thousands of nurses walked out statewide that day against takebacks demanded by Sutter Health and Kaiser Permanente.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



October 10, 1986

"We're on a strike that now includes 30 percent of the state's dairy farmers. We need more to survive. What we ask for is a doubling of the price paid us for our milk. There is no surplus of milk, it's just not distributed evenly."

So testified Jo Bates, a dairy farmer for 23 years from Greenwich, New York, speaking before hearings of the New York Legislative Commission on Dairy Industry Development.

The commission was formed by the legislature to review the situation in the state's dairy industry, where disastrously low prices to producers have spurred a growing number of farmers to go on strike and begin dumping out their milk in an effort to raise the price.

It costs a New York dairy farmer \$1.50 to produce a gallon of milk, for which the farmer is paid only 75 cents.



October 9, 1961

Cuba's Revolutionary Government on Oct. 3 announced that it was granting political asylum to Robert F. Williams, North Carolina Negro leader. Williams, who was indicted on frame-up kidnap charges following white-supremacist rioting against Freedom Riders and Negroes in Monroe, N.C., on Aug. 27, had been the object of a FBI manhunt covering the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

In granting a haven of safety to Williams, the Cuban government stated that a paramount consideration was the fact that Negroes "are mistreated and persecuted as animals" in the U.S.

The FBI Wanted Circular for Williams contained false and inciting information calculated to encourage police officers encountering him to shoot on sight.



December 12, 1936

Columns of the daily press are being given over to the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace now in session at Buenos Aires. The implication is that history is being written, civilization is on the march, the Roosevelt smile and the doctrine of "the good neighbor" have triumphed over the Forces of Darkness, and that all is for the best in the best of all possible Pan-American worlds.

What has really happened, of course, is that the Latin American countries have, in the words of Hubert Herring, *New York Times* correspondent, "lost faith in the League of Nations as the bulwark for weak people." The answer is a new and smaller edition of the Thieves Kitchen now under way in the form of the seventh Pan-American conference.

### Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

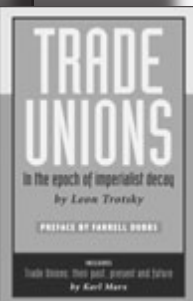
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# Cuban Five

Continued from front page

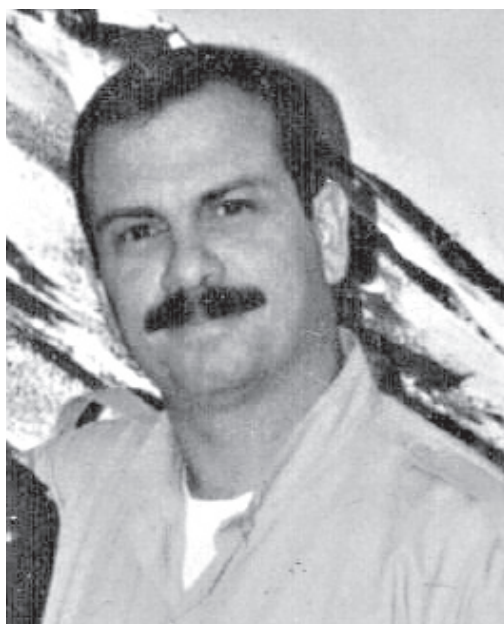
“conspiracy to commit espionage.” Hernández was convicted of “conspiracy to commit murder” based on the fraudulent allegation that he bore responsibility for the Cuban government’s shootdown of two hostile airplanes flown by Brothers to the Rescue that invaded Cuban airspace in 1996. Their sentences ranged from 15 years in jail for René González, to double life plus 15 years for Hernández.

Last week’s issue of the *Militant* explained the argument put forward in the habeas corpus petition filed last year by Hernández moving that his conviction and sentence be vacated on the grounds that the errors made by his defense attorney, particularly in relation to the conspiracy to commit murder charge, denied him a fair trial. Such habeas corpus petitions are open to defendants after all regular appeals have been exhausted. In June 2009, the Supreme Court refused to hear all appeals by the five.

## Journalists in pay of government

Four of the five Cuban revolutionaries have filed habeas corpus motions based on another fact unknown to them and their lawyers at the time of the trial, that the government paid thousands of dollars to journalists in Miami who produced fictitious and prejudicial articles that deprived them of their right to due process and a fair trial.

In September 2006 the *Miami Herald* published a front-page article headlined “10 Journalists Take U.S. Pay,” reporting for the first time that well-known reporters in the Miami area who covered the case, including some who wrote for the *Miami Herald* and its Spanish-language edition *El Nuevo Herald*, had received payments from the U.S. government’s



Fernando González



Antonio Guerrero



Ramón Labañino

Office of Cuba Broadcasting, an arm of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the government agency in charge of all nonmilitary international broadcasting sponsored by the U.S. government.

The Office of Cuba Broadcasting directs the operation of Radio and TV Martí—two government stations funded to the tune of some \$30 million a year that transmit counterrevolutionary propaganda in Cuba and southern Florida.

According to the reply filed August 16 by Guerrero to the government’s response to his habeas motion, journalist Ariel Remos received at least \$11,750 during the trial, publishing at least 15 articles both before and during the proceedings in *Diario las Américas*, a Spanish-language daily with a circulation of more than 45,000 in southern Florida. In a concocted story titled, “Castro Represents a Continuous Challenge to the Security of the U.S.,” Remos falsely reported from the trial that there was a so-called “order of the Cuban intelligence service to one of its agents to find a place in south Florida to unload explosives and weapons,” which, the article asserted, “could be chemical or

bacteriological weapons.”

According to information obtained from the government under a Freedom of Information Act request by the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five, Julio Estorino worked for Radio Martí from 1998 to 2001, although payments for his service during the trial have not been disclosed.

In the Jan. 5, 2001, issue of *Diario las Américas*, more than a month after the trial began, Estorino wrote: “For if the insanity shown in the downing of the airplanes from Brothers to the Rescue over international waters, with cold, malicious calculation, were not enough, now it comes to light that Castro’s secret services have been trying to find infiltration points for weapons and explosives on the coastlines of this country, a task that was assigned to some of those implicated in the spy network.”

A habeas corpus motion arguing for a new trial on the basis of the government’s payment to journalists was filed by lawyers for Antonio Guerrero in late March. In response the government urged the court to reject the motion on the grounds that it cites only a small

number of articles and lacks a “factual basis” because it does not show how those articles prejudiced the jury which the “Court took steps to insulate from outside influences.”

As affidavits filed by the defendants document, the scope of Washington’s propaganda campaign is unknown because U.S. officials have denied freedom of information requests for the names of all the journalists on its payroll and the amounts paid.

The limited information obtained from the government shows that five journalists received more than \$80,000 during the eight-month trial and that a total of some \$370,000 has been paid to seven reporters at various times since 1999.

## Violation of constitutional rights

The arrest and trial of the Cuban Five was marked by what have become increasingly common violations of rights guaranteed by the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, including FBI burglaries of their homes, the use of secret “evidence” by the prosecution and suppression of evidence for their defense, and the use of extreme pretrial solitary confinement in an attempt to break them and impede the preparation of their defense.

The trial court denied seven motions from lawyers for the five that the trial take place somewhere other than Miami-Dade County, where they faced a particularly biased atmosphere. Washington vehemently opposed all efforts to change the venue.

In fact, from the moment of the arrests, U.S. government spokespersons promoted public hostility by issuing statements about the five being a “Cuban spy network” that “threatens national security.” Despite being much weaker than they had been in the past, right-wing Cuban-American groups

# US rulers use Libya war to boost clout in Africa

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Washington is gaining a stronger foothold in Africa through the expanding operations of the U.S. Africa Command in Libya. The continent is quickly becoming the most important source of hydrocarbons and other fuel for the United States and represents a key battleground in the competition for resources and markets between Washington and Beijing.

The U.S. Africa Command was established in 2008. Before the Libyan civil war, it “never thought of itself as leading [offensive military] operations,” its commander, Army Gen. Carter Ham, told *The Hill*. Ham said the command has been strengthened through its combat experience in Libya and stressed his opinion that it should make more use of special forces. “The demand for special-operations forces of lots of different flavors is pretty significant in Africa.”

In the opening weeks of the as-

sault, the U.S. military knocked out Gadhafi’s air defenses. Since then the bulk of NATO’s airstrikes have been launched by Paris and London. Washington, however, continues to provide essential surveillance support and munitions.

Since March NATO has conducted more than 8,700 sorties against Libya. On September 21 it extended these attacks for at least the next 90 days.

U.S. tanker planes have pumped nearly 150 million gallons of fuel into NATO combat aircraft, U.S. Air Mobility Command chief Gen. Raymond Johns told the media September 20. These “flying gas stations” have serviced 11,000 aircraft so those planes can “schlack somebody when they need to be schlacked,” Johns told *The Hill*.

Washington announced the reopening of its embassy in Tripoli, the capital, September 22. Two weeks earlier, U.S. ambassador Gene Cretz “participated in a State Department conference call with about 150 American companies hoping to do business with Libya,” reported the *New York Times*.

At the same time the Pentagon dispatched 16 military personnel to embassy grounds, according to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. This is in addition to special units of CIA operatives who have been operating on the ground in Libya along with special forces troops from France and the United Kingdom,

helping NATO target its airstrikes.

Washington is also sending “weapons experts”—government contractors who are often former members of U.S. special operations forces. The National Transitional Council, which functions as Libya’s interim government, has requested more be sent to “embed within units of rebels” to destroy “man-portable air-defense systems,” reported *The Atlantic*.

“Now that we have the official letter of request, we’re ramping up,” an unnamed State Department spokesman told the *National Journal*.

Stiff fighting continues in several remaining Gadhafi strongholds a month since the fall of Tripoli. Though rebel forces claim to have seized the port of Sirte, Gadhafi’s hometown, they’ve been unable to take full control of the city despite NATO bombardment. Residents face deteriorating conditions with no water or electricity and dwindling food supplies, fleeing civilians told the media.

Migrant workers from Sub-Saharan Africa, long discriminated against under the Gadhafi regime, have faced some of the most difficult conditions during the civil war. Many have been targeted by rebel forces and accused of being pro-Gadhafi mercenaries.

“Many black men—perhaps thousands, no one knows for sure—have

Continued on page 9

**Toronto, Ontario**  
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Consul General of Cuba in Toronto  
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of Contemporary Islamic Thought  
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## Recommended reading

**United States vs Cuban Five**  
by Dr. Rodolfo Dávalos

From start to finish, the process was vindictive. Every right of the accused was violated.  
—Dr. Rodolfo Dávalos Fernández



**Cuba and the Coming American Revolution**  
by Jack Barnes

The Cuban Revolution has had a profound impact, including the end of the U.S. monopoly on advanced weapons for and world revolution is defended.

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Gerardo Hernández



René González

known for their violent actions against those deemed even sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution organized protests in Miami during the trial, including on the courthouse steps during the first day of jury selection.

Potential jurors said they were concerned about what could happen if they acquitted the Cuban revolutionaries. During the trial, jurors complained they felt harassed as right-wing TV stations filmed them entering and leaving the courthouse, all the way to their cars, even filming their license plates.

“Just as the government was contending that the trial should go forward in Miami,” said Richard Klugh, an attorney for Hernández, at a March 22 press conference, it was “flooding the local media with money to fund anti-Cuba, anti-Castro, anti-Cuban Five messages. That was a fundamental denial of due process.”

In 2005, a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta threw out the convictions of the five revolutionaries on the grounds that “the ‘perfect storm’ created by pretrial publicity surrounding this case” denied them due process, and ordered a new

trial. The government appealed the ruling, which was then reversed a year later by the full 12-judge panel of the same court, with one judge strongly dissenting.

The 2006 ruling stated: “Nothing in the trial record suggests that twelve fair and impartial jurors could not be assembled by the trial judge to try the defendants impartially and fairly.”

The habeas motions are before Judge Joan Lenard, who presided over the 2001 trial. On the basis of the 2006 ruling, government prosecutors made a case in their response to Hernández’s habeas motion that the question of the trial venue has already been settled, that there’s nothing new worth considering. They urged the judge to dismiss the habeas motions and deny requests for evidentiary hearings.

A habeas corpus motion is due to be filed by Fernando González shortly. Once all motions, affidavits, and replies have been filed, the timing of her ruling is at the judge’s discretion.

Mary-Alice Waters contributed to this article.

# Cuba presses fight for return of René González

BY MICHEL POITRAS

René González, one of the five Cuban revolutionaries condemned to draconian terms of incarceration in U.S. prisons, is scheduled to be released October 7 after serving more than 13 years of his 15-year sentence. On September 16, U.S. District Judge Joan Lenard rejected González’s motion that he be allowed to return to Cuba and serve in his own country a three-year supervised release that is part of his sentence.

González’s attorney Philip Horowitz explained in a phone interview September 27 that the conditions of González’s release, including where he will live, are in the hands of the U.S. Probation Office.

“We are currently considering whether to request of Judge Joan Lenard that she reconsider her decision or file an appeal with a higher-level court,” Horowitz recently told Prensa Latina news agency.

In recent weeks, the high-stakes battle to win the release of all five Cubans has received unusual public attention.

During a September 7-14 trip to Havana, Bill Richardson, former governor of New Mexico, presented a White House offer to waive probation for González in exchange for

agreement by the Cuban government to release Alan Gross, a U.S. citizen serving a 15-year sentence in Cuba for distributing sophisticated satellite equipment as part of a covert State Department operation to undermine the Cuban government.

Cuba rejected Richardson’s proposition after he described Gross to the press as a “hostage” of Cuba and arrogantly vowed to stay in Cuba until he met Gross. “Cuba is a sovereign country which does not accept blackmail, pressure or posturing,” stated Josefina Vidal of Cuba’s Foreign Affairs Ministry. Judge Lenard’s decision not to waive her instruction that González serve his probation in the U.S. came two days after Richardson’s trip. González’s request had been sitting on her desk since February.

In an interview with *New York Times* editors and reporters published September 23, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla responded to questions concerning the release of Gross saying, “I can tell you the agenda submitted [for discussion] to the U.S. government—and I reiterate here it is still on the table— included the topic of the Cuban Five, although we understand that as it is an element related to justice, it is also of

Continued on page 9

## Washington steps up drone hits

Continued from front page

ington Post.

Drone attacks in Yemen and Somalia are carried out under White House approval, the *Post* reports. In Pakistan targets are selected by the CIA and U.S. Joint Special Operations Command.

The *New York Times* reported September 16 that there is a debate within the Pentagon and State Department “on whether the United States may take aim at only a handful of high-level leaders of militant groups who are personally linked to plots to attack the United

States or whether it may also attack the thousands of low-level foot soldiers.” In Pakistan, the paper noted, Washington uses “‘signature’ strikes—those that are aimed at killing clusters of people whose identities are not known but who are deemed likely members of a militant group.” The approach has killed hundreds of combatants fighting U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan along with many civilians.

Speaking at Harvard University September 16, Obama’s “counterterrorism” adviser John Brennan said, “The United States does not view our authority to use military force against al-Qaeda as being restricted solely to ‘hot’ battlefields like Afghanistan. We reserve the right to take unilateral action if or when other governments are unwilling or unable to take the necessary actions themselves.”

The *Post* said the Obama administration has “significantly increased” drone attacks on Yemen in recent months. In both Yemen and Somalia, the paper added, several drone strikes are reported by local media every week.

A drone attack on the southern Somalia port city of Kismayo September 15 killed as many as 26 people, the *Independent* reported. Drones have struck in Yemen’s Abayan province, where Islamist groups opposed to the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh have seized control, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

### Cuban 5: For a world free of death penalty



AP/Savannah Morning News

The message below was sent by Ramón Labañino on behalf of the Cuban Five. Troy Davis (above during 1991 trial), an African-American framed-up for the 1989 killing of a Savannah, Ga., cop, was executed September 21. Even though seven of nine nonpolice witnesses recanted or changed their testimony, several saying the police pressured them to falsely name Davis the killer, the Georgia and U.S. Supreme Courts refused to grant a new trial.

Brothers and sisters:

We feel deeply the horrific execution of Troy Davis. It is another terrible injustice and stain on the history of this country. We join in the pain felt by his relatives, friends and brothers across the world. Now we have another cause, another flag, to pursue our struggle for a better world for all, free of the death penalty and barbarism.

In Troy’s honor, and all the innocents of the world, we must continue, united, until the final victory!

Our most heart-felt condolences!

Five fraternal embraces,

Antonio Guerrero  
Gerardo Hernández

Fernando González  
René González

Ramón Labañino

### Cuban Five: A Judicial Cover-up Hernández

eedings were tainted, corrupt, null and void, accused to ‘due process of law’ was flouted.”  
Hernández—\$22

### the Coming American Revolution arnes

Revolution of 1959 had a worldwide political cluding on workers and youth in the imperialist As the proletarian-based struggle for Black rights cing in the U.S., the social transformation fought n by Cuban toilers set an example that socialist is not only necessary—it can be made and —\$10

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# ‘Workers must learn to act politically and think socially’

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

If, during the course of their experiences in struggle, the labor militants are helped to analyze the causes of the social and economic ills facing them; if they are aided in perceiving the essence of an outlived capitalism—they will learn that the existing problems are not incidental and episodic at all, but the consequence of a deep structural crisis of the system. They will then see why governmental control must be taken away from the capitalists by labor and its allies.



Workers rout cops and deputies during 1934 truck drivers' strike in Minneapolis. Farrell Dobbs, author of four-volume *Teamster* series, was a central leader of battles that transformed labor in Midwest into powerful class-struggle social movement during 1930s.

Basic to such a rise in the workers' class consciousness is understanding that a fundamental change must take place in the role of the trade unions, which constitute the existing form of mass organization among the workers in this country. These broad instruments of struggle must be turned away from reliance upon so-called friends among the capitalist politicians. They must break off the self-defeating collaboration with the bosses' government, that has been imposed by bureaucratic misleaders. The unions must be transformed into mechanisms for independent and militant action by the workers all along the line. Restrictions on the right to strike must be vigorously opposed and freedom to exercise that right firmly asserted. Internal union democracy must be established so that all questions can be decided on the basis of majority rule. Then, and only then, will organized labor manage to bring its full weight to bear in confrontations with the employers at the industrial level.

Whenever conflicts of significant magnitude erupt within industry today, the government intervenes on the employers' side; and this interference is bound to intensify as capitalist decay gets worse. From this it follows that trade union action alone will prove less and less capable of resolving the workers' problems, even on a limited basis.

Objectively, industrial conflicts will assume more and more a political character, and even the most powerfully organized workers will be faced with an increasingly urgent need to act on the new and higher plane of politics. . . .

In the process of creating their own mass party, based upon and controlled by the trade unions, the organized workers can draw unorganized, unemployed, and undocumented sections of their class into a broad political alliance. Labor will then be in a position to act both in a more unified manner and through advanced forms of struggle.

The workers will learn to generalize their needs, as a class, and to address their demands on a political basis to the capitalists, as a class. Political confrontation of that kind—for example, the nationalization of a given industry under workers' control—will raise labor action as a whole to a higher plane and at the same time impart new vigor to the continuing trade union struggles. Increased militancy within industry will serve, in turn, to reinforce activity in the political sphere. In that way interacting processes will develop through which the workers will attain greater class consciousness, more complete solidarity, and, hence, mounting ability to outfight the bosses.

Before unity of the exploited masses can be attained, however, still another of organized labor's existing policies

must be thoroughly reversed. The labor movement must champion and give unqualified support to the demands of the Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Indians, and other oppressed national minorities, and of women and youth.

As Leon Trotsky<sup>1</sup> insisted in discussions during the 1930s, the American workers must learn to act politically and to think socially if they are to attain the class consciousness and solidarity needed to defeat the exploiters. This is the opposite of the narrow class-collaborationist course pursued by the labor bureaucracy and the privileged layers they reflect. Thus, as a matter of principle, the trade union movement must use its power to actively fight for such progressive demands as affirmative action programs against racial and sexual discrimination on the job, in the union, in hiring, housing, health care, and education; the right to abortion and childcare; busing and bilingual, bicultural education; the right to a free college education for all youth.

If unconditional backing of that kind is given, the labor movement will be helping itself in a double sense. The strengthening of anticapitalist struggles on other fronts will make it harder for the employing class to concentrate its fire on the trade unions. The greater the scope of mass confrontations with the bosses' government, the more effectively will labor be able to involve its natural allies in the development of independent political action on a massive scale. . . .

If trade unionists aid the victims of U.S. imperialism in other countries—and at the same time back all progressive causes within the United States—they will earn extensive support for their own struggles. An anticapitalist united front can thus be built, both nationally and internationally, and, as it grows in strength, the relationship of class forces will be changed to the decisive advantage of the workers and their allies.

1. Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) was a central leader of the 1917 revolution in Russia and, from the mid-1920s, the principal leader in the Soviet Union and then internationally of the fight to continue the revolution's communist course against its reversal by the privileged caste headed by Joseph Stalin.

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# Cops defend class interests of bosses

The September 21 police assault on members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Ladies’ Auxiliary in Longview, Wash., highlights what the cops “protect and serve”—the property, profits and prerogatives of the capitalist class. Working people should condemn this attack on longshore workers, their supporters and their union, and demand charges against those defending the union be dropped.

In January 2000 hundreds of police attacked members of the International Longshoremen’s Association in Charleston, S.C., when they picketed a shipping company using nonunion labor. Leaders of the union were then framed up on “riot” charges. But through a determined struggle—which included joining with thousands of others to demand removal of the Confederate flag from the state capitol—the shipping company was compelled to hire union workers and charges against the union leaders were dropped.

As Farrell Dobbs, a central leader of the Teamster strikes of the 1930s and of the Socialist Workers Party, explains in this week’s Books of the Month selection: “Whenever conflicts of significant magnitude erupt within industry today, the government intervenes on the employers’ side; and this interference is bound to intensify as capitalist decay gets worse.” It’s the bosses’ government. The job of their cops and “justice” system is to keep working people “in line.”

That’s what’s behind their death penalty, a weapon of terror aimed at working people, under which Troy Davis, framed up by cops, was executed in Georgia

September 21. The same penalty is meted out to workers in the streets, as recently happened to John Collado in New York when he tried to help his neighbor who appeared to be under assault by what turned out to be an undercover cop.

A fuller picture of the brutal reality of capitalist rule for working people comes through when you consider the thousands killed and maimed each year in the coal mines, oil fields, factories, construction sites and other workplaces under the bosses’ relentless drive for profit—a different form of violence reproduced by the same exploitive system.

As workers are increasingly forced to organize resistance to employer attacks, the bosses’ government will seek to push them back with scabs, stool pigeons, legal red tape and an array of court tactics from injunctions against picketing to “conspiracy” charges to secret “evidence,” and violence by armed bodies under the direction of the capitalists’ state power.

As working people resist the employers’ drive to foist the burden of the capitalist crisis on their backs, they increasingly gain firsthand experience that shines light on the character and role of the police. It also becomes easier to see that capitalism cannot be reformed. That the working class must wrest political power from the capitalist class, dismantling their state, their army and their cops. Replacing the dictatorship of capital with workers power will then lay the basis for the construction of a socialist world free of exploitation and class violence.

# Solidarity boosts sugar workers’ fight

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and other acts of solidarity. This past week union members handed out hundreds of flyers supporting the fight at the annual French Fry Feed and Potato Parade Bowl.

Local 167G, based in Grand Forks, N.D., is organizing a food drive September 30 and October 1 throughout the Red River Valley. “We’ve already received commitments for donations of potatoes and flour,” said Scott Ripplinger, a locked-out worker from the East Grand Forks plant. “We’re reaching out for more, with plans to deliver food on October 1 to locked-out workers in North Dakota, who aren’t getting unemployment checks. Steelworkers in Gwinner, N.D., who already donated \$15,000, are going to help in the effort.” Local 563 of the Construction and General Laborers in Minneapolis donated \$5,000 September 16. About 20 members of Local 563 recently joined a protest in Minnetonka against Strom Engineering, the scabherding agency employed by American Crystal Sugar.

Local 3884 of the American Federation of Government Employers in Fargo, N.D., sent a check for \$3,000 to the union. Mail carriers in Bismarck, N.D., from Local 957 of the National Association of Letter Carriers, donated \$500.

Several Minnesota locals of the BCTGM made donations: Local 62G in Mankato sent in \$1,000; Local 13G in Hastings, \$1,000; and \$100 came from Local 22 in Minneapolis.

A total of \$3,650 has been contributed by locals

of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees. In a thank-you letter to the union, BCTGM Local 167G President John Risky wrote that the support “has bolstered the morale of many of our Brothers and Sisters throughout the Valley.”

“No matter how big or small, we appreciate the support,” Risky told the *Militant*.

In addition, several individuals have sent in checks to support the union’s fight. Some write brief notes of solidarity, like retired BCTGM worker Jack Lick, who sent in \$200, with a note saying, “My heart is with our members.”

Contributions have also come from out of state. Amanda Ulman, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Houston, visited the picket lines September 24-25. She handed over \$175 in donations collected from 11 workers at the nonunion forklift assembly plant where she works.

“We used articles from the *Militant* to discuss the facts of the lockout,” said Ulman. “Some took copies of the paper to show to other coworkers to raise money. Many were angry at the fact that the company locked out the workers and then the state of North Dakota denied them unemployment.”

The union is challenging the North Dakota law that says workers involved in a labor dispute, including being locked out, can’t draw unemployment benefits.

Donations can be sent to BCTGM Local 167G, 100 N 3rd, Suite 50, Grand Forks, ND 58203. Write checks to BCTGM 167G with “2011 BCTGM lockout” in the memo line.

# Cuba presses for return of González

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a humanitarian character.”

“I do not see any way in which we can move on toward a solution of the Mr. Gross case but from a humanitarian point of view and on the basis of reciprocity,” Rodríguez added.

The Cuban Five were arrested in September 1998, charged with conspiracy to commit espionage and in the case of one of them, Gerardo Hernández, conspiracy to commit murder, and handed unusually long prison terms for their convictions—frame up aside. While awaiting trial, they were subjected to almost 17 months of solitary confinement. Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, wives of René

González and Gerardo Hernández, have been denied the right to see their husbands—González for more than 11 years and Hernández since his incarceration.

In an earlier interview with the *Militant*, René González’s defense attorney Horowitz stressed that defendants with dual citizenships, like González who is both a U.S. and Cuban citizen, are often allowed to serve their parole outside the United States.

González has offered to renounce his U.S. citizenship following his release if there were agreement he would be allowed to return to Cuba that same day.

# Armstrong lockout

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24/7 picket line at the Marietta plant.

Speakers at the rally included Frank Snyder, secretary-treasurer of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO; Jean Martin, president of the Lancaster United Labor Council; Joe Rumberger, USW Local 285 president; and Sheldon “Snoop” Gregg, president of USW Local 1165 in Coatesville, which organized a plant-gate collection for the locked-out workers.

“Seniority is a very big issue, people work all these years,” said Dru Rico. “If you take that away, what do you have?” Rico is a retired worker, who along with other Armstrong retirees has been helping with the picket line.

“This isn’t about negotiating a contract, but busting the union. That’s what we believe,” said Chris Swope, a member of the “strike and defense committee” that aids locked-out workers.

Bonnie Malone, with 37 years at Armstrong, said she was one of the “linger’ers,” referring to a derogatory comment by a company representative during negotiations that anyone with more than five years’ seniority “did nothing but lingering.” Some workers wore T-shirts saying, “I’m just a linger’er. It is what it is.”

Gary Butzer, whose family has worked at Armstrong for four generations, said that having the union at Armstrong has helped keep wages up for everyone in the area.

The locked-out workers appreciate the solidarity offered by other working people.

“Some of the Norfolk Southern engineers bringing in the corn starch from Archer Daniels Midland and truck drivers carrying the mineral wool haven’t been crossing the picket line,” said locked-out mechanic Gary Kline.

“We are grateful for all the support from the community because we’ve really got our hands full,” USW member Tom Houser said.

Houser told the *Militant* he was incensed when the company cut off health benefits the first day of the lockout.” We have some workers who are in the middle of chemotherapy for cancer,” he said. USW 441 Unit president John Bevel explained that medical coverage for retirees at the Marietta plant ended Dec. 31, 2010, and that the USW is now providing some health care coverage for locked-out workers.

Another important contract issue is greater control of mandatory overtime by the company—workers are already on a seven-day rotating shift. “How much more can we work?” asked production worker Greg Bechtold.

Armstrong is pushing for concessions from the unions at its other plants. Local 285 Vice President Steve Gobble told the *Militant* that bosses at the Lancaster plant are pushing for a third wage tier and to outsource warehouse work at lower pay. Machinists at this plant are organized by the International Association of Machinists; their contract expires in November.

Also speaking at the rally was Dean Showers, president of USW Local 6996 in Sinking Springs, where 51 union members were locked out March 6 by Hofmann Industries, a steel tube fabricator. “What do we get from these companies? Only disrespect,” Showers stated.

# War in Libya

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been arrested and warehoused in improvised jails in the capital and elsewhere,” reported the September 2 *Los Angeles Times*.

“We are workers, we are not soldiers,” Godfrey Ogor, 29, told the *Times* at one of the squalid encampments where hundreds have been crammed into an abandoned port facility just outside Tripoli. Armed men have raided such camps and looted residents’ belongings, “snatching life savings at gunpoint,” reported the *Times*.

Mustafa Abdel Jalil, head of the National Transitional Council, said he supports renewing the 2008 Italian-Libyan “Treaty of Friendship” that existed under Gadhafi. Under the pact African migrants were blocked from leaving Libyan shores and Italy’s coast guard would intercept and immediately deport asylum seekers traveling by boat back to Libya.